

Vendor Cart Policy

The Board of Public Works has jurisdiction over public streets, ways, sidewalks, parks, and cemeteries in the City of Northampton.

For many years, for a variety of reasons, the Board has followed an unwritten policy of prohibiting on-going vendor carts for commercial purposes in the Central Business District. The Board has long issued one-day or short-term permits for vendors in the Central Business District for special events of community benefit, including sidewalk sales, artistic and musical events, parades, New Year's Eve celebrations, and particularly for charitable and nonprofit purposes. There is no intent to change or modify this policy.

There have been many recent requests for permission by vendors to sell food or goods from carts on a commercial basis in the Central Business District. The Board considered that issues of public policy had been raised and requested guidance. A committee convened by the Mayor met and considered appropriate regulations for vendor carts, if allowed. This committee recommended that, if any permits for vendor carts were to be issued, the only appropriate location would be at the head of Pulaski Park. The principal concerns raised were sidewalk access, trash, availability of public restrooms, and other matters of health and safety.

Placing carts on sidewalks could interfere with pedestrian access and safety, and, in conjunction with newspaper racks and sandwich signs, could present areas of congestion.

A public meeting was held by the Board on October 30, 1991 to consider the advisability of permitting vendors carts. Citizens concerned for the serenity, cleanliness, atmosphere, and character of Pulaski Park spoke against authorizing vendor carts in the park, on a permanent basis.

Business owners closest to the Park expressed distress about the consequences of vendor carts in terms of noise, safety, and other burdens.

No citizen spoke in favor of such carts at the meeting.

The committee convened by the Mayor, including a representative of the Downtown Business Association, opposed vendor carts in the Central Business District except at the head of Pulaski Park. The Board of Public Works also considered that placement of such carts in the park might have an adverse impact on an important adjacent public facility - the Academy of Music. Additionally, the serenity, atmosphere, and character of Pulaski Park would be affected.

For these many reasons, the Board of Public Works has adopted a policy against permitting ongoing vendor carts on a continuing basis on public property in the Central Business District. This policy does not modify the continuing ability to obtain permits for special events or outside the Central Business District. Further, vendors may seek permission from landowners to place their carts on private property if Board of Health regulations are satisfied.

Approved: 30 Oct 1991